Empathy Crisis

After reviewing the document from today’s intelligence briefing, specifically “A Syrian Refugee Story”, we were able to dismiss the suspect Al Baghdadi. On the surface the documents were easy to digest due to the simple reading level and the simplicity of the syntax. It was effortless to interpret because Syrians are presented in a negative light in the media, since popular media tends to point to Syrians as terrorists. After reading the case we concluded that the suspicion associated with Al Baghdadi was simple racial profiling. In the eyes of the world’s media, terrorists have become the default bad guy, and people have succumb to the popular belief that the Syrian nationality equate to terrorism. People like having a bad guy to hate and love having someone to blame. The only reason the Federal Bureau of Investigation launched an investigation on him was because of his race. The FBI report only adds to further racism, they use derogatory and demeaning language and intentionally try and manipulate his words to make him seem more culpable. While the only link Al Baghdadi had to the entire case was the fact that he worked at Port Fourchon, he wasn't even on site at the time of the explosion. He was home and asleep by 7. They assumed he was guilty because that would help close their case more easily and comply with society’s expectations.

However, though racial profiling is morally and ethically wrong, terrorism is still an eminent threat to the United States, and the majority of external terrorists threats come from the Middle East. In light of this, the information regarding Al Baghdadi can be seen as significant. After and explosion of this size as well as the Islamic state’s hijacking of the Oceania it becomes necessary to find evidence to search for a link between the two possible terrorist threats. Being the only Syrian refugee associated with Port Fourchon, he would be an obvious suspect in the explosion. With this in mind, the FBI’s tactics may have been affective if he actually was associated with a terrorist organization. Their interrogation tactics can be viewed as a way to overwhelm him into giving a confession or allow them to read his body language as they list potential scenarios. The author of “A Syrian Refugee Story”, Alex Ackerman, uses imagery to create a pathos appeal. Ackerman is trying to cultivate a feeling of empathy in the reader. He does this by portraying the Syrian family as a classic American home. While it makes a heart-warming read, the author is clearly biased toward Al Baghdadi.

After changing our perspective, it changed our personal reality. Specifically looking at Al Baghdadi in the eyes of an American who has witnessed significant acts of terrorism, such as 9/11, his detainment and interrogation is necessary. Keeping this in mind the FBI agents questioning him may not have been saying those thing to him out of racism but rather out of fear. Even though none of us have personally experienced racism of this magnitude, looking at other people and seeing them as human beings can allow us to transcend race, religion, gender, sexuality, etc. Empathy is a powerful tool, use it.